

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A virtual community system managing a plurality of users and a plurality of resources accessible by said plurality of users comprising:

a community server ~~to form a persistent virtual community for each of said resources;~~

at least one component monitoring each user of said plurality of users accessing said plurality of resources;

said community server associating each resource of said plurality of resources accessed by each user of said plurality of users user to said each user of said plurality of users;

said community server ~~dynamically creating persistent virtual community for each of said resources when a first user of said plurality of users is accessing each resource of said resources;~~ said virtual community including those users accessing said each of said resource and user generated content that is created by users who accessed or are accessing a resource to share with others;

at least one component displaying user generated content associated with said resource to each user when said user is accessing said resource; said user generated content is created by said user during his visit to said resource to share with others.

2. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein each of the plurality of resources is associated with a corresponding community.

3. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein each of the plurality of resources comprises a web resource.

4. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein each of the plurality of resources comprises a non-web resource.

5. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein each of the plurality of resources has a unique name.

6. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein users automatically become members of the virtual community associated with said particular resource when they access the resource.

7. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the community server is further operating to provide community services to community members.

8. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the community server is further operating to enable communication between community members .

9. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the community server is further operating to enable community members to perform community activities.
10. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the community server is further operating to provide collaboration between community members.
11. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the community server is further operating to provide notification to community members when a new user joins the community.
12. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the community server is further operating to enable community members to communicate with users outside the community.
13. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the community server is further operating to provide community members with information regarding the community.
14. (previously presented) The system of claim 13, wherein the information comprises information presented to the community members while they are accessing the particular resource.

15. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the community server is further operating to enable new community services provided by community members.

16. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein said resources comprise private resources each having a unique name.

17. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the community server is further operating to provide community member authentication services.

18. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, further comprising a web resource server associated with said particular resource.

19. (previously presented) The system of claim 18, wherein each web resource server can contact at least one of said community servers to provide community services.

20. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the community server is disposed behind a firewall to limit community members to users in an intranet.

21. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the community server is further operating to provide user privacy preferences to community members.

22. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the community server is further operating to uniquely identify each community member across multiple communities.

23. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the community server is further operating to track community member's activities.

24. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the community server is further operating to organize an information content for each virtual community into a plurality of hyperlinked pages.

25. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the community server is further operating to keep statistical information regarding the community.

26. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the community server is further operating to connect users who have accessed the same resource.

27. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, further comprising a proxy server coupled to the community server and a web resource server, the proxy server operating to serve a web resource content and connect to the community based on the resource being served.

28. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the community server is further operating to combine a plurality of communities into a larger community based upon similar resource use.

29. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the community server is further operating to enable searches of each of the plurality of communities from a web site.

30. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the community server is further operating to provide customized filtering preferences set by users, systems and communities.

Claims 31-59 (Canceled)

60. (Currently Amended) A virtual community system associating a plurality of users and a plurality of resources accessible by each user of said plurality of users comprising:

a plurality of virtual communities each having a virtual community area, where resources are mapped to virtual communities, and each virtual community of said plurality of virtual communities contains community and user access information for said resources;

a user access database containing resource access records from each user of said plurality of users for each resource of said plurality of resources;

a virtual community server operated to monitor accesses from each of said users to each of said resources, said persistent virtual community server also performing additional functions including:

recording accesses into said user access database;

mapping each accessed resource to a virtual community;

~~dynamically creating said persistent virtual community when a first user of said plurality of users is accessing said resource;~~

updating said virtual community with access from said user to said resource;

displaying user generated content associated with said resource to each user when said user is accessing said resource; said user generated content is created by said user during his visit to said resource to share with others.

61. (previously presented) The system of claim 60, wherein the virtual community areas are stored in directories, files, or databases.

62. (previously presented) The system of claim 60, wherein the virtual community server comprises a group of servers.

63. (previously presented) The system of claim 60, wherein the user access database comprises a distributed database.

64. (previously presented) The system of claim 60, wherein each virtual community area is created on demand when a first user accesses a resource.

65. (previously presented) The system of claim 60, wherein the user access database creates a new user record only when a new user entry is queried and is not yet in the database.

66. (previously presented) The system of claim 60, wherein each virtual community area comprises a web server or web pages.

67. (previously presented) The system of claim 60, wherein each virtual community area comprises information regarding a particular community.

68. (previously presented) The system of claim 60, wherein each virtual community area comprises server side components that support user and community interactivity and activities.

69. (previously presented) The system of claim 60, wherein each virtual community area may utilize server side technologies including server side script, CGI, Servlet, web services and weblogs.

70. (previously presented) The system of claim 60, wherein the user access database comprises the current status of individual user's information.

71. (previously presented) The system of claim 60, wherein the user access database also stores user personal data including messages from other users, preferences or privacy/security settings.

72. (previously presented) The system of claim 60, wherein the community server further to group different community areas together to form a larger community for a bigger scope of resources.

73. (Currently Amended)

A method of forming resource-based virtual communities with a plurality of users and a plurality of resources, the method comprising the steps of:

allowing each of said users to access said plurality of resources;

causing a server to monitor each user accessing a resource;

causing said server to associate each resource accessed with a particular user accessing it;

causing said server to form a persistent virtual community for each of said resources, said community comprising those users who have accessed a particular resource, ~~dynamically creating said persistent virtual community when a first user of said plurality of users is accessing said resource ;~~

causing said server to display user generated content associated with said resource to each user when said user is accessing said resource; said user generated content is created by said user during his visit to said resource to share with others.

74. (previously presented) The method of claim 73, wherein the resource being accessed by the user is a web resource, including a web site, a web page, a newsgroup or a discussion forum.

75. (previously presented) The method of claim 73, wherein the resource being accessed by the user is a non-web resource, including a software product, a bulletin board, a game, an FTP site, a file, an image, a photo, or products that can be shared by users.

76. (previously presented) The method of claim 73, wherein each of the plurality of accessed resources is associated with a corresponding resource based virtual community.

77. (previously presented) The method of claim 73, further comprising the step of enabling new community services for community members.

78. (previously presented) The method of claim 73, further comprising the step of providing users community information and community services including hit count, total users, current users, feedback, comments, ratings, reviews, references or other useful information for the resource.

79. (previously presented) The method of claim 73, further comprising the step of enabling user collaboration with other community members including making comments, publishing reviews, rating resources, writing notes, sending messages, sharing whiteboards, chatting, helping each other, asking and answering questions, exchanging ideas, interests matching, scheduling meetings, online auctions, online dating, broadcasting, marketing or advertisements.

80. (previously presented) The method of claim 73 further comprising the steps of:

allowing each of a plurality of users to access the resources;

causing an accessed resource to return the original resource; and

causing the accessed resource to connect users to a virtual community

based on the accessed resource.

81. (previously presented) The method of claim 73-further comprising the steps of:

allowing each of a plurality of users to access the resources through a proxy server;

causing the proxy server to return the original resource; and

causing the proxy server to connect the user to ~~the~~ a virtual community based on the accessed resource.

82. (previously presented) The method of claim 73 further comprising the steps of:

allowing client side software installed on a user's computer to discover the resource accessed by the user; and

causing the client side software to connect the user to the virtual community based on the accessed resource.

83. (previously presented) The method of claim 73, further comprising allowing the user to access the virtual community and the accessed resource in a non-distributive way including using context menus, status bars, popup windows, balloon help messages, task bars or embedded frames inside a current web page.

84. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein each of the plurality of resources comprises a non-Internet based product including a software, a device, an audio file, a video file, a service or or a commodity.

85. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the user connects to the virtual community through a mobile device such as a PDA or a cellular phone.

86. (previously presented) The system of claim 1, further comprising a client side software installable to a user's computer, the software operates to detect users activity of accessing a resource and connecting to a virtual community based on an accessed resource.

87. (previously presented) The system of claim 86, wherein the client side software also provides a toolbar button installable on a user's browser to connect to the virtual community when selected by the user.

88. (previously presented) The system of claim 86, wherein the client side software also provides a context menu installable on the user's browser to connect to the virtual community when selected by the user.

89. (previously presented) The method of claim 86, wherein the client side software is installed manually by the user or automatically when the user accesses the resource.

90. (previously presented) The method of claim 86, wherein the client side software is further operated to display a virtual community page displayed in a separate frame, popup window or balloon window along with the resource.

91. (previously presented) The system of claim 86, wherein the client side software is a standalone software agent.

92. (previously presented) The system of claim 86, wherein the client side software is further operated to discover current web resources accessed by the user by monitoring web requests from browsers.

93. (previously presented) The method of claim 86, wherein the client side software is further operated to detect a current resource being used by hooking into a protocol handling chain, or using a protocol filter, a kernel driver, or a customized content handler; or by listening for system or windows events from browsers, or hooking into process, system or network APIs.

94. (previously presented) The system of claim 86, wherein the client side software is a browser.

95. (previously presented) The system of claim 86, wherein the client side software is further operated to make multiple connections to multiple virtual communities based on multiple resources the user is accessing and thus enabling users to participate in multiple communities simultaneously.

96. (previously presented) The system of claim 86, wherein the client side software is a browser plugin integrated in a user's existing web browser.

97. (previously presented) The system of claim 96, wherein the browser plugin includes browser helper objects, plugins, applets, Javascript, flash, ActiveX object, content, dynamic html, connection, protocol filters or extension.

98. (previously presented) The system of claim 86, wherein the client side software can be a special component, shared object, dynamic library, driver or extensions.

99. (previously presented) The system of claim 86, wherein the client side software is further operated to detect current software used by the user and then connect to an associated virtual community based on that resource.

100. (previously presented) The system of claim 99, wherein the client side software is statically or dynamically linked to a software resource and further

operated to run along with the software resource when the software resource is started by the user.

101. (previously presented) The system of claim 99, wherein the client side software resides in a software resource to provide new functions, features, services and applications.